

Don Green Interviews Tom Ascol

An Evening with Tom Ascol

By Don Green

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Don Green. Well, it's my tremendous privilege to be able to introduce our guest speaker this evening. Dr. Tom Ascol comes to us from Cape Coral, Florida where he is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church and has been there since 1986, which is a remarkable ministry in and of itself. He is the President of Founders Ministries. He's a nationally known Bible teacher and conference speaker, and we're going to get the benefit of his ministry here this evening in just a little bit. Tom and I connected through our mutual friend, Travis Allen, north of Denver, Colorado and we spent the day getting to know each other and I feel like I've made a close friend already. He's very like-minded with us. Their church uses the same Confession of Faith that we do, the 1689, in addition to other commitments that they have. But I just want to say that it is a signature token of the blessing of God on Truth Community Church that Tom Ascol is with us here this evening.

He's going to preach later in a little bit, but first he agreed to a little bit of an interview and so, Tom, if you would come. Please welcome him. We're very glad to have you with us.

Dr. Tom Ascol. Well, thank you. It's a joy to be here. It's an honor, so I appreciate the invitation and I feel at home.

Don. Good. Well, just think of us as friends from this night forward and we have a church here that appreciates your ministry very much.

Tom. Thank you.

Don. As I like to tell people, Truth Community Church is a relational church, our people are close, and I think they might like to hear a little bit about your background. Tell us just a little bit about your family, about your wife and the 10 children you have.

Tom. Yeah.

Don. It's an inside joke.

Tom. Right. Yeah, well, I've been married for 40 years to Donna and we met in college and God brought us together while I was in seminary, we got married. She is a pediatric

nurse who worked for just a couple years before we started having kids, and then she started taking care of the kids. We've got six of them and home-schooled them. I kind of say we home-schooled them but that's not really true. She home-schooled them and I was the enforcer during those days. Four of those kids are married now, the oldest is not, the youngest is not. The oldest is in Texas, works at a church as an Administrative Assistant. The other five are there with us in Cape Coral and they're all faithful, active in the church by God's grace and we have 13 grandkids and one on the way, and hopefully more to come after that. So we're at a fun time of life to be able to enjoy those grandchildren together.

I am the youngest of six kids. I grew up in Beaumont, Texas outside of Houston. My father was the son of a Muslim immigrant from Syria and he had a rough life growing up. His dad was murdered when he was 10 years old. He was sitting beside him in a carriage and a man stuck a gun outside of a window and shot him. So my dad had a difficult life growing up, cared for his two younger siblings. They were basically treated like slaves in Arkansas. They became indentured servants to a farmer that the state gave them to, and it wasn't until my dad was 18 that he was able to get the emancipation from that responsibility and then he raises a younger brother and sister himself.

So anyway, my dad had a hard life and, mom, they got married early in life in Arkansas. My mom was a godly woman. She taught all of her six kids the Gospel, taught me the Gospel. I remember learning to pray by watching my mom. One day, we had a difficult life growing up and she had a very difficult life with my dad, and one day she was on the floor kneeling down at the couch praying and, you know, I was praying with her and I finally just stopped and started looking at her and I thought she really believes somebody's listening, you know? I mean, I was just a little kid and it impressed me deeply. So mom was very very influential in all of this and I praise God for her.

Came to Christ while I was young in the Baptist church there in Beaumont. My dad, he had all kind of problems and, you know, I was pretty hard on him growing up because I just didn't understand the difficulties he lived with. I'm sure he carried a lot of demons with him because of the things that he had experienced as a kid, but he was given over to alcohol and lots of immorality and lots of violence and made life tough in the family, and what it complicated even more for me, not all of us but I was the youngest, is that he was a Sunday school teacher and a deacon during all that time in the Baptist church, and so he was my Sunday school teacher while I was in high school, living this way that I knew he was living and it seemed like other folks in the church probably knew too but it didn't matter. So that gave me a real bitterness toward churches and pastors and then God called me to be a pastor and I thought this is a cruel joke that the Lord has played on me to call me to be a pastor when I didn't like pastors, you know?

Don. Yeah, you said earlier, you told me that you didn't trust pastors and you didn't trust, there wasn't a pastor that you trusted, I think is what you said at the time you became a pastor.

Tom. Yeah. No...

Don. I'm not sure how that works.

Tom. It was a real psychological dilemma, you know, what do you do? But God delivered me from that and made me realize how arrogant I was, you know, and how unkind and unloving I was.

Don. Talk about the end of your father's life. There was a happy end to the story.

Tom. Yeah, it really is. I mean, God brought him to himself in his later years and my mom died first, dad died in '98, and those last seven or eight years of his life, you know, there was a real sorrow in him and every time the kids were around him, he would always apologize and say, "I know I haven't been the kind of dad I should have been. I have a lot of regrets." And the last time I ever spoke to him, I'd gone to Texas for a family Christmas and took him back, he was in the hospital so they gave him a day pass to come out to be with the family, so I took him back and we were talking alone in his room before I left him and, you know, he starts again with this regret and all of the kids, by God's grace all six of us, four of us are still living, but all of us knew the Lord, know the Lord and all tried to evangelize him, Gospel him, and assure him of our love. So I was doing that again and, you know, he just was deeply ridden with a sense of guilt and I said, "Dad, I want to tell you something." I said, "You know, I've thought about this a lot for years," because I was angry and bitter toward my dad for many many years, and I said, "but I thought about this a lot," and I said, "If God were to take me back when I was just a kid and say, 'I'll give you any man in the world to be your dad,'" I said, "I'd choose you." I said, "I'd want you to be my dad," I said, "because you're the man that God chose for me to be my dad and you're exactly what I needed. And I want you to know that I love you and I praise God for the privilege of being your son." And that was a really sweet moment, you know, for me...

Don. How did he respond to that?

Tom. Well, he wept and we both wept, you know. It was just a tender time and it's God grace, I mean, you know, had you known me during those years when I was really bitter and angry, you know, you'd be surprised that except for God's grace, you know God's grace. So, I mean, it was just God's grace at work and that's the last time I saw him. So we spoke but about four months later he died and I praise God for that. So I'm very hopeful that, he assured me he knew the Lord, he assured me he was repenting of sin and I trust that that's true.

Don. Yeah, now that actually lays a foundation for a lot of the things that we're going to talk about tonight. Between your own conversion and seeing the way that the Gospel and the way that Christ redeemed your dad and the power of the Gospel to reconcile that very badly broken relationship, the Gospel is more than just an academic subject to you, you've experienced the power in your own life, you've seen it in your family, you've seen it in ministry. You know, Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel." And so when you've experienced the power of the Gospel in reality and then the Lord brings you into

ministry, there's a certain level of commitment that it brings to you that you feel the urgency to defend it, right?

Tom. Yeah, that's right.

Don. Talk about that.

Tom. Yeah, and coupled with that, I mean, the church experience and, again, I was harsh and judgmental so I'm not justifying my attitudes but I did see things that really turned me off. I mean, why would you let a guy like that be a Sunday school teacher and a deacon, much less, you know, a member of the church. So all that stuff confused me and when God called me to be a pastor and that was confirmed in the church, I remember, I mean, it was genuinely a difficult difficult time to come to grips with that. I remember praying. I said, "You know, Lord I don't want to do this," and I said, "but I don't be a typical pastor." I said, "I just, I can't see myself being a typical pastor." And so there was always a guardedness even when it was sinfully jaded, you know, there was a guardedness I think God used to give me a seriousness about, you know, if I'm going to do this, I don't want to just play games.

Don. Yeah, typical pastor. What do you have in mind when you were saying that? What was in your mind when you said that?

Tom. A pastor that would let a drunk violent man be a deacon and a Sunday school teacher.

Don. Okay, okay, good. Amen.

Tom. Yeah, you know, I mean, a guy like that. And I didn't understand things about regenerate church membership, church discipline, confessionalism, any of that stuff, expositional preaching, but I came to learn. You know, that's kind of a package deal that if you're going to really take the Bible seriously, then you can't just say, "This is what the Bible says," you've got to say, "Okay, now this is what it means and this is what we've got to do about it."

Don. Yeah, there you go.

Tom. You know, and so that, God's helped me with that and I certainly made a thousand mistakes and I'm not suggesting I've done it all right now but I have a desire for that. I'm not willing to be theoretical. I don't want to be a theoretical inerrantist, I don't want to be a theoretical Calvinist, I don't want to be a theoretical Christian, you know, I want to try to understand and be what God says the Bible, what the Bible says we ought to be.

So with that, I mean, the Gospel became increasingly clear to me and, you know, praise God, a person's experience can be better than their understanding and that's still true and my experience I trust for many years of my life was far better than my understanding. My fear now is that my understanding might be better than my experience at times, you

know, and that's equally deadly. But as God began to teach me the nature of this grace and I began to, you know, as I, I was at a place in my life with my dad when that conversation took place that he had taught me more of the Gospel and how the Gospel works and I was preaching it and glorying in it more and more and just since that time, you know. Nobody's hopeless. If God can save me, he can save anybody and so there's no reason for us to water it down, there's no reason for us to hide it, no reason for us to say, "Oh well, if we say this it's going to be offensive, people won't like it." If God's revealed it, it's true and it's good and it's right and it's powerful.

So those kinds of battles that I know some of my friends and others in the ministry fight because they maybe looked at it differently or came up differently, God settled those things for me pretty early and I praise him for that. So by his grace I can honestly say that I don't doubt the power of the Gospel and I don't sense within me any reason to hesitate preaching the Gospel or any need to add it and, in fact, add to it, what's happened to me is I've become very very defensive of it and jealous of it and I don't want to see it undermined, I don't want to see it deluded, I don't want to see it threatened by ideas that can hijack it and use its language while, in fact, draining it of what the Bible says it actually is.

Don. And your perception is that draining is happening before our very eyes with the social justice movement that has come into the Evangelical church.

Tom. Yeah, that's exactly right and I was a slow advocate of that because I just couldn't believe it. You know, I'm hearing...

Don. Slow advocate of what?

Tom. Coming to this position.

Don. Okay.

Tom. You know, yeah, I'm thinking, "No, this can't be right. That doesn't sound right but I, you know, I must not be thinking right because if this was really that bad or if was hearing things that are really wrong in that way, there are a lot better guys than me that would be on top of it." Because that's what those guys do for a living and I've trusted them and I've watched them and they've done this for years, and I even called some of them, you know, and said, "Hey, this guy said this and this guy's teaching this..." And it took me a year, a year and a half, to finally become convinced, no, there really is a problem and for whatever reason the normal people we regard as watchmen aren't sounding any alarms.

Don. They're not on the wall on this one.

Tom. No, and that was a hard pill to swallow.

Don. Let's define some terms so that we're all on a common base of things. Tell us what we're talking about when we talk about the social justice gospel, and maybe the related term critical race theory.

Tom. Yeah, well, I'll talk about this a little bit in the message coming up, but basically the social justice movement which has been around for decades but it's kind of gained new impetus in the last five years or so, at least to my awareness and the way that it's come into the Evangelical church, I mean, it was not uncommon at all for the social gospel and those that had an affinity to that to talk about these things, but now we're seeing guys that previously we regarded as rock-solid Evangelicals advocating positions of the social justice movement which basically says that there are so many systemic endemic injustices woven into society, particularly American society, and included in that the American Evangelical movement which now because of these ideologies that are within the social justice movement, it's called White Evangelicalism, you know, because everything's racialized now, has just left myriads of people treated unjustly and oppressed, and that if we really loved Jesus and we really believed the Bible and we really want to advocate for the message of the Bible, then we're going to sympathize, empathize with and do what we can to lift up those that are oppressed based upon this understanding of oppression.

So what's fueling the social justice movement is the understanding of the world that comes out of a Marxist worldview that in our day over the last 50-75 years, neo-Marxism, it's given rise with some post... I don't want to be unfair so I'm trying to qualify things but let me just speak kind of broadly, bluntly and just be assured there's a lot of nuance to this that I don't want to misrepresent anybody. But the neo-Marxist idea took Karl Marx's philosophy of economics and said, "Well, that didn't really work," because Marx had this Utopian vision of history that there was going to be this great revolution, capitalism was going to be the end of it and capitalism be overthrown and then we're all going to be equal. You know, it's the John Lennon song, you know, "Imagine." It's just going to be great, the whole world is going to be one. But he thought it was economic and that the people who were the producers would eventually revolt against the owners of production who benefited from the labor of the producers, and then this equitable society would be ushered in.

Well, that didn't happen. I mean, when it was adopted in Russia and other places, there was widespread bloodshed and then you had England and America where the middle class arose, and that just blew away the Marxist idea. It couldn't happen. You couldn't have upward mobility in a Marxist system. So Marxist's disciples said, "What went wrong?" And they said, "Well, the idea of oppressor and oppression, oppressed is right but it's not merely economic, it's social and we need to see people in categories of oppression and oppressed based upon not merely money but on ethnicity and on sexuality, and now gender, and ability, and religion." So Christianity, so what, you've got all these categories of oppression and however many of them that you identify with, that elevates you more into oppressor role, and how many of them you don't, then that puts you in the oppressed role. And what has to happen if there's going to be real justice, is

these oppressors have to step down or be overthrown, and the oppressed need to be elevated.

And that's what's going on in our society today. That's what Black Lives Matter is all about. That organization, as the founders of it have boldly said, "We are trained Marxists. We are schooled Marxists." And that stuff has come into the church, so now then ideas of justice and love and mercy and equality are being infused with these neo-Marxists ideas that are completely incompatible with the Bible.

Don. You go to the Scriptures and you see God establishing hierarchy in almost every area of life that you can think of. You know, submit to your government; wives, submit to your husbands; children, submit to your parents; workers, submit to your employers. How did we ever get from those categories in Scripture to the idea that all of that needs to be overthrown in the name of Christ?

Tom. Yeah, the idea of fighting against like male headship, leadership and authority in the marriage and male leadership in the home, and those two things, we've had Christian expressions that have fought against that already but it's been the social gospel folks, it's been the liberal folks who've said that. And so we've had the dividing lines have been, okay, you've got conservative Evangelicals who are complementarian in our view of marriage or in our understanding of men/women relationship. Well, complementarianism now has been so qualified that you've got soft complementarianism, narrow versus broad complementarianism, hard versus soft, and it's just on and on and on so many qualifications and when you look at what some of the folks are advocating, still wanting to claim to be complementarianism, it's nothing but egalitarianism. That's what it is.

And we've got self-professed complementarians who have said, "We need to tear down the hierarchies." That's a quote. And you think, "What's going on?" Well, here's what I think is going on is the pressure from the culture is saying, "You are a bunch of misogynists. You expect women to be submissive to men in the church? You expect only men to be pastors? You expect the husband to be the leader in the home, or the father to be the leader of the family? Why, that's misogynistic. You don't love women, you oppress women. Look at all the abuse that's taken place of women. It's because of this." This has been said. Beth Moore said this, that the patriarchy, the complementarian theology, as she called it, is responsible for, if not fueling at least providing the way for abuse of women in the church and in the home. Well, that's just nonsense and any true complementarian, as we've defined it historically in the last 40 years, would say, "No, a man who abuses a woman, he's not a complementarian, he's a wicked man."

Don. He's not a Christian.

Tom. Yeah, you know, I mean, we've got all kinds of problems there. So I think the pressure from the culture and if I put the best construction on it, I think some of these folks want, they genuinely want to be evangelistic and they think that the way you can be more profitably evangelistic is by being nice, you know, or being well-liked, and the bottom line is it comes back to a lack of confidence, it's a failed confidence in the word of

God. You know, is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation or not? If it is, let's preach it, let's don't try to tame it, let's don't knock off the edges. Let's set it before people in love and persuade.

Don. As we're looking at this come into the church, there's an awfully lot at stake. This is no minor matter as you've said in your book. By the way, I'll just take this opportunity to mention the book. Tom contributed a couple of chapters to this book, "By What Standard?" There's a free copy of this for everybody that's here in attendance, one per household, that will be available after the service so please be sure to pick up your copy of this very important book on the way out. Thank you for your work in this.

What's happened is that the Gospel is starting to get redefined by these things. I think of Galatians 3:28, that in Christ that, you know, there's neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, and on and on it goes, but what this social justice movement is bringing into the Evangelical church, we're being told that we should be viewing people through all of these different categories and it seems like it's overturning the very idea that Christ came to bring a unified people together who share in redemption by the blood of Christ. Talk about that for a bit, if you would.

Tom. Yeah, it's true and, you know, one of the sad, disillusioning, disorienting things about this is so many people who if 10 years ago, men I've trusted, known, some of them I've known decades and loved and served with who in the recent years, last, let me just limit it to six months, have said things that undermine that. One has said, Thabiti Anyabwile, I mean, I love Thabiti, he put up publicly a statement and I don't want to misrepresent him at all but it basically was, you know, "My white Evangelical friends that want to identify with me as a Christian, I appreciate that but you've got to understand if you can't identify with me as a black man before you, identify with me as a Christian, you're not helping."

Don. Yeah, before.

Tom. Before.

Don. Yeah, and so the idea of race, as they define it, precedes identity as a Christian. That's shocking.

Tom. It's tragic. There's a, I've got another dear friend who's, you know, I want to be careful but let me just say another man who's been well-known platformed, a black man who said to his eldership not long ago that one of them said, "You know, I'm concerned that we are undermining the Gospel in what we're doing as a church. And it's almost as if we're suggesting to our people the Gospel's not enough." And this man said, "The Gospel is not enough because the Gospel, we had the Gospel but it would not let a man of my color drink at the same water fountain as a man of your color and that shows the Gospel's not enough."

You know, when we get into those territories, if that's a conviction, that's a different religion. That's not Christianity. I hate saying that, I really do and I've been slow to say it, but as I've come to see it, I've got to say it and, I mean, there's a separation taking place and I'm not suggesting that everybody that doesn't agree with me is not a Christian, but I'm saying if you believe stuff like that, if you say the Gospel is not enough, or if you say you've got to identify with me on the basis of something other than Christ, above Christ, I've got serious problems with that. I don't know how to read the Bible and allow for that point of view and say, "Oh yeah, we're walking on the same path."

Don. It's very troubling, and to the point that the term "white privilege" that you've written a chapter on it here, the idea that as a white person, certainly in America, you can be a racist without even knowing it. Explain what that concept is and how we need to respond to it.

Tom. Yeah, well, white privilege is an idea that comes out of critical race theory. Critical race theory says that racism is inherent in Western civilization, particularly in American society. And we've heard this, if you've kept up with the 1619 Project and other things that are going on in our culture today, the way that it's defined is, okay, racism is, it is prejudice plus and power, and power is defined as being, you know, part of this oppressive class, and so anybody who's not that cannot be racist. So critical race theory says you can't be a person of color or a minority ethnicity and be a racist. It's impossible because you don't have the power to carry out your prejudice. And this prejudice is so permeated, so endemic, systemic in our society that you can have racism without having any racists in the room. I mean, this is a statement. You can go on UCLA's website, look at their public policy on critical race theory, and this is the definition, you'll find this line in their definition, "that you need not have a racist in order to have racism." Which, you know, I'm thinking, what other sins is that true of, you know, if we're defining racism biblically in James 4 of sinful partiality, or James 1, yeah, James 1. Is it James 1 or James 2, I forget? James, where, you know, he talks about if a wealthy man comes in, the poor man comes in, you show partiality to the wealthy man. That's sinful. Well, what other sins can we say, "You can have murder without a murderer"?

Don. And without a victim.

Tom. Yeah, I mean, how do you? You just can't do that. So it's a shell game. You know, there's a sleight of hand that goes on here where...and that's what's happening, quite honestly, to a lot of sensitive Christians because the stories are horrible. Has this country been guilty of all kind of racism? No doubt. Shelby Steele's book, "White Guilt," I recommend to everyone. Shelby Steele is an intellectual from California, a black guy, brilliant. I don't know that he's a Christian, I don't think he is, but it's a great book. It's a very good book and he tells his story in it and as he's telling his story, I'm weeping reading it because this is in my lifetime. When I'm reading about Shelby Steele and, you know, he'd take a trip with his dad cross country and they'd pull into these little towns to get gas, they'd have to find a black guy and say, "Hey, where can we get gas? Or where can we go to the bathroom?" Because they couldn't go to the regular gas stations and bathrooms, and I'm thinking, "This is in America? This is in my lifetime?"

There's no doubt that has happened. There's no doubt racism goes on today. And so when somebody comes to you and says, "Man, don't you hate racism? Aren't you against it?" Absolutely. And then when they slip in and say, "Okay, well, if so, well, this is what racism is and this is what you've got to do about it." You know, well, if you're not careful, you can be easily manipulated into thinking, "Oh, well, you know, I'm feeling guilty. I hate what's happened in my country." And so, "Well, if that's true, then we've got to do this. And yeah, if you're telling me it's systemic."

Don. The term is getting redefined to go beyond those segregationist things that you were describing. It's getting redefined in our day to make it apply to things that it really shouldn't.

Tom. Yeah, absolutely, and I mean, you know, it's said that it's worse today than it's ever been and there's a lot of things that they want to attribute, many of these advocates of critical race theory want to attribute problems that go on today with racial disparities to the 1960's and '50's and '40's with Jim Crow and things that were going on with redlining. There's no doubt a lot of sinful things based on sinful attitudes of race, but what Shelby Steele, what Thomas Sowell, what Walter Williams and other black writers have demonstrated is you look at the black family, there was a as high or higher rate of intactness in terms of marriage going into the '40's and '50's as with whites. It's after the '60's that things began to fall apart and become so problematic and what happened in the '60's, quite honestly, contributed to that. So if you're going to look back to Jim Crow and the '40's and '50's, 30's, 40's and 50's and say these things created the problems that we have today, no, those problems weren't there then. And folks want to say, "Well, look what the Civil War did and it's because of slavery." Well, it was horrible, it was horrible but there was all kinds of progress being made. Not perfectly and it's not, I'm not suggesting those were the halcyon days of the United States, but there was progress and there has been progress and what we're seeing now is the very programs and the very proposals to address racism are worse than the things that have fomented a lot of the racist attitudes in the nation. And Shelby Steele sees that. I mean, he was a radical, you know, he was on the way of Malcolm X and that, and was shifted out of it. He doesn't attribute it to God but he just says, you know, he kind of came to his senses and he writes about that from an insider perspective in a way that's really helpful to see.

Don. Now some of the Evangelical proponents of these things, you'll hear comments made that we have to repent of our whiteness and the thing that I find really troubling is that we're called to repent of things that happened before we were born just because of our, you know, of the pigmentation in our skin, and accused of sinful attitudes that maybe it's not even in my heart, and so I'm called to repent of things that I never did and of thoughts that I've never thought and this is turning repentance on its head, it seems to me. Talk to us about that a bit.

Tom. Yeah, well, if you've kept up, I mean, during the horrible riots that we've seen and the unleashing of Black Lives Matter that's funded to the tunes of hundreds of millions of dollars and has been advocated by some Evangelical leaders, I mean, you've probably

seen the videos, you've heard the stories of them going up and finding white people on the street and saying, "Get on your knees," you know, "and repent." It's that kind of stuff and folks are doing it and there's this idea that because you are of this oppressive class, then you're guilty and you're guilty not just of all the problems that I may have today as a person of color but you are guilty of everything that has happened in this society that has been rigged to benefit you and to take advantage of people like me and me, and it destroys any kind of opportunity to look at history objectively or try to understand it. Horrific things have happened, there's no doubt about that, but to say that things today are no different or better than before, I mean, we just don't have laws on the books today. In fact, as my friend Voddie Baucham argues, you have far greater advantages today if you are a minority in America because there are things that have been put in place to give you advantages over folks that are not of minority ethnicity. And so to call upon somebody to repent of something that was done 100 years ago or 200 or 500 years ago, it becomes...

Don. This makes repentance meaningless in biblical terms, to divorce it from individual responsibility.

Tom. It does and it's just historically naive and erroneous. Darrell Harrison, a friend of mine, a black guy who's out at Grace To You now working there, Darrell's done more research on American slavery than anybody I personally know. Darrell says, "I come from slave-traders. My family owned slaves." I forget the percentage but it's like 20+% of the early slave-owners in America were Africans, you know, blacks. So if we're going to do this confession repentance thing, you can't even do it. I mean, how do you sort it out historically?

And one of the other arguments and another historian friend of mine says, you know, said, "I think the," let's see if I can get it right. I forget which European group it is that persecuted his ancestors. He said, "I think I deserve reparations from the French because I come from the Irish," or however it worked. I mean, why stop at 400 years? You know, why not go back 700 years? Why not go back 1,000 years? What's the reason that we stop where we do? We need to be able to look at things historically and say, "Yeah, this is right, this is wrong because this is what the standard of right and wrong says and this is what ought to be done, this is what ought not to be done because this is what God's word says." And not let the fact that right and wrong things have taken place, bad things have taken place, become an excuse for me to therefore kind of pull out of my hat this call on you to repent, you know, because we know this is wrong and we know that repentance has to be advocated for those who have done what's wrong, and this is wrong and I'm implicating you in the wrong therefore you've got to repent.

Don. Yeah, now here's my question for you, kind of a little bit of a devil's advocate position on it. If that's true, if I need to repent because of the color of my skin and the color of my skin necessarily makes me guilty for what preceded based on generations back, explain to me how God is not a co-conspirator in my racism since he created me in my mother's womb.

Tom. Yeah, no, I say amen to that.

Don. I mean, at some point we've got to recognize the providence of God. God made us who we are. God placed us in history, you know, at the time that we did. I don't see how eventually you don't, the logical outcome of this, it seems to me, is that eventually you have to accuse God himself of sins of racism because God is, you know, God gives us the parents that we had and he's intimately involved in who I came out of my mother's womb as.

Tom. Yeah, see, I mean, my reading of the Bible sets me up to say, okay, there's a standard of righteousness and anything that deviates from that, falls short of that is sin. We call it that no matter if it happened 1,000 years ago, if it happened yesterday, we just have the same standard, it doesn't change. But it also teaches me, the Bible teaches me that there's a God who's ruling and overruling in all that, and I think that's exactly what's going on with Joseph when he looks at his brothers and he said, "You did this. It was evil, you meant it for evil, God meant it for good." And I don't think the ideologies that have come into the church today that are advocating we have got to see this reversal and the oppressors have got to become the oppressed or get down and get over their whiteness, it's as if there's no place for God's providence. It doesn't justify what Joseph's brothers did to him. They were wrong. It was wrong. They were wicked. They were guilty. They were sinful in that. But there's more going on than just that. God's doing things.

And so whereas before there are slave narratives where some of the slaves talk about in America how they learned the Gospel, you know, coming over here as slaves. Well, you say that today and, I mean, you'll get run through. People will say, "How dare you?" I've done this actually, I have taken verses like Ephesians 6:8-9, I think it is, 7, 8 and 9, you know, "Slaves, obey your masters." I just quoted them on social media. "Tom, those are the very verses that were used in the 19th century to justify chattel slavery. How dare you?"

Don. You can't even quote God's word anymore.

Tom. Yeah, are there any other verses that are off-limits to us?

Don. Right, right.

Tom. I mean, we've got to deal with the reality but we can't let reality come in and cause us to shave off God's word or be embarrassed about God's word. There are people who are embarrassed that the book of Titus is in the Bible and they're trying, or Philemon, I'm sorry. Philemon is in the Bible, they try to massage it into, "Well, that wasn't really slavery. Or you know, Paul really was sending secret messages to Philemon that he had to let go of the slave, Onesimus." You know, I don't pretend to understand everything but I'm not going to be embarrassed by anything that the Bible says because this is God's world. He's the one that designed it and he rules it. He's given us his word. We have a standard. We're to live according to it. When we fail, we call that sin and we look at Christ who did everything right and we trust in him but we're free to say, "This is sin and

this is what is supposed to be done." And whenever we sin, we can repent because we have a Savior. But don't ask me to repent for something where there's no sin.

Don. Right. And don't ask me to be embarrassed by God's word. Do you know what? I'm going to preach God's word without apology. It's his word and, you know, we're servants of his word and there's nothing there that I'm not going to preach in context and try to interpret best and say, "This is what God says and here's how it applies."

Tom. But you know, Don, I mean, I'm firmly convinced what is coming especially if Joe Biden gets put in the Oval Office, I don't think it's going to be far-fetched at all that you and I sitting here saying these kind of things and preaching these kind of things is going to put us at odds with governmental authorities. I just think it's here. I think those days are here. People told me back in 2016 if Hillary got elected, said, "Tom, you'll go to prison if Hillary gets elected." And I kind of laughed at them. I'm not laughing anymore. I think this is where we are and sadly, if it happens, I think we're going to see some Christian leaders that will applaud it, some so-called Christian leaders.

Don. There's a sifting taking place even now, isn't there. The men, and even within the church looking beyond society, looking within the church, the kinds of things that we are saying here tonight would exclude you from certain platforms from men that a few years ago would have embraced you. Can you talk about that just a little bit? You can name names if you want to, if you want to be general, that's okay, but I'd just like for everyone to understand that this is having real world consequences inside the church.

Tom. It is. How do you minister to the LGBTQ community? You know, we've got folks that have said things, J. D. Greear is one of them, he's President of the Southern Baptist Convention, he says, "You know," he said, "we ought to whisper where God whispers in the Bible and shout where God shouts, and when it comes to sexual sin God whispers in the Bible but he shouts about pride," you know, and materialism and such.

Don. I don't think 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is a whisper.

Tom. Yeah, I don't think...

Don. I think that's a pretty loud statement that you're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Tom. Yeah. You know, I wonder if Sodom and Gomorrah thought, "Yeah, look at that, a whispering God."

Don. Yeah. "What sweet whispers of sulfur are falling down on my head here."

Tom. But the point is and, you know, J. D. said, "We just want to minister to LGBTQ people," and you know, I praise God for that but you can't be more loving than God. You just can't and if God calls something sin, if he calls it an abomination, we are not loving

people to hide the fact that God says the way they are living is an abomination. Now you can do that as a jerk and I'm not suggesting that, but I am suggesting that we don't hide it.

After 9/11, we had some Muslim guys that we had ministered to, we had a connection with Tajik people in Uzbekistan and there were some Tajik young men in Cape Coral, and so after 9/11, man, I mean, the FBI visited them so we were really trying to minister to them and keep them together. And one of them whose grandfather was an imam, had come to church, started coming and he was in my home, we loved him, and one Sunday night he waited for me after the service and he was visibly upset and he said, "I need to ask you something." He said, "Did I understand you right?" He said, "You say Jesus is the only way to go, be right with God and go to heaven?" I said, "Yeah." "Do you think Mohammad is a false prophet?"

Don. Wow.

Tom. I said, "Yeah, I do." He said, "Those are words of death to me." He said, "I am your enemy. I'll never set foot in this building again." And, you know, it broke my heart. It broke my heart but I'm thinking, I don't know what else I could have done. I think I was being loving and I think I would do it again, you know, and we talked for like two hours before he left but he's back in Central Asia. We correspond but, you know, he said, "These are words of death and war."

So I don't know how else to do that. You know, I don't know, I probably could have said, "Oh, well, you know, he meant well," or something but I just don't think we can be wiser than God or more loving than God. And so there are folks that have been trusted leaders in the Evangelical world that for whatever reason have either gone mute on these issues and let them come into the church, or some of them have opened the door and welcomed them in and think that by doing so they're actually promoting racial reconciliation, they're promoting the elevation of women, they're promoting being more loving toward those who experience sexual dysphoria and sexual confusion.

Don. Well, we're grateful, Tom, for the ministry that God's given to you and for the way that you are standing for God's word in the midst of this. We are with you 100% on this without qualification. I'm afraid our time for this interview has gotten away from us so we need to bring this to a close but thank you for being here. Thank you for what you're doing. Let us know how we can help and support and pray for you in the days to come because we want to be an encouragement to you as God's given you this opportunity to speak on these matters. Tom, thank you so much.

Tom. Thank you, brother.

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